

Storm King Ranger Station
Olympic National Park
N. side of U.S. Highway 101 (near Barnes Pt.)
Lake Crescent Vicinity
Clallam County
Washington

HABS No. WA-155

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WASH
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PHOTOGRAPHS

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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STORM KING RANGER STATION

location: Township 30 N
Range 9 W
Section 25 W.M.
North side of U.S. Highway 101 near Barnes Point on
Lake Crescent, 19 miles southwest of Port Angeles
Clallam County, Washington

date: circa 1903-1909

owner: Department of Interior
National Park Service
Olympic National Park
600 East Park Avenue
Port Angeles, Washington 98362

use: Currently unoccupied; soon to be dismantled and
reconstructed to serve as a visitor contact point

significance: Storm King Ranger Station is an excellent example of early
North Peninsula log construction is one of the
oldest remaining structures in Olympic National
Park, and possibly the oldest extant building in
the Lake Crescent area. Its historical association
with Chris Morgenroth, an early homesteader and
forest ranger on the peninsula also contribute to
its significance. Morgenroth's testimony before
Congress helped in the establishment of Olympic
National Park. In December 1981, the keeper of
the National Register determined the cabin eligible
for nomination to the National Register.

historian: Pamela S. Meidell

Historical Record: Storm King Ranger Station

Storm King Ranger Station sits at the foot of Mount Storm King on the southern shore of Lake Crescent on Washington's Olympic Peninsula. It is the oldest log structure remaining within the boundaries of Olympic National Park,¹ a testament to the durability of such structures. Its significance lies in its antiquity and in the cabin's historical associations with Chris Morgenroth, an early homesteader and forest ranger on the peninsula.

Chris Morgenroth, a native of Germany, arrived in Washington in the spring of 1890,² and claimed a homestead on the Bogachiel River in the western end of Clallam County. Although he had every intention of farming the land, the cost and effort of clearing and preparing it (he estimated the cost at \$300 per acre³) and then getting crops out to market once they were planted proved too great a challenge. Speaking for himself and other peninsula homesteaders, he claimed "we wanted farm land . . . we were going to pioneer and develop the West, but there were no markets, no roads, no trails, and we did not get any for at least thirty years afterward."⁴ He helped blaze and build some of those trails in the mountains and the upper regions of the Hoh and Bogachiel Rivers when he worked for the government in what was then the U.S. Forest Reserve.⁵ When the U.S. Forest Service was created in 1903, Morgenroth joined up, becoming one of the first rangers. He worked for the Forest Service for twenty-three years, and is remembered particularly for replanting the Sol Duc burn after the fire in 1907, which destroyed 13,000 acres.⁶ It was the first reforestation work in Olympic National Forest.⁷

According to National Park Service records,⁸ Chris Morgenroth built what has become generally known as the Morgenroth Cabin in 1909 for the Forest Service. Other accounts add that he built the cabin with the assistance of a local Norwegian carpenter. Katherine Morgenroth Flaherty, Chris Morgenroth's daughter, maintains that her father built the cabin in 1903 or 1904 with the help of Paul Laufeld, another ranger.⁹

In 1915, Edward Brooks, a forest ranger under Chris Morgenroth and later the proprietor of Lapoeel Resort on Lake Crescent, lived in the cabin with his family. His son, Norman Brooks, remembers hunting for crawfish in the shallow water in front of the cabin.¹⁰ In addition to serving as living quarters for employees, the cabin functioned as a ranger station, patrol cabin, and as lodging for seasonal employees.

The cabin, the first Forest Service ranger station in the Olympic Forest Reserve, later became an integral part of the federal wilderness management system, practiced first by the Forest Service, by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930s, and later,

by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930s, and later, by the National Park Service. "In his position of Chief Forest Service Ranger for Olympic National Park, and later, as supervisor of a Civilian Conservation Corps crew in the park, Morgenroth established this system. . . . [It] includes a series of central ranger stations serving as supply bases, wilderness ranger stations such as Storm King, and fire lookouts, . . . the early warning systems for fire prevention. Over 600 miles of trail were built to connect this system. Radio telephone wires were strung throughout the forest to provide quick communications. All along the trails, open-faced shelters were constructed from logs and split shakes to provide shelter for campers. Bridges were constructed over the wild peninsula rivers with on-site materials and haywire ingenuity."¹¹

Between his tenure with the Forest Service and his position with the CCC (the late 1920s, early 1930s), Morgenroth worked for the timber companies of Port Angeles. He "was employed to get their pulpwood supplies and . . . to purchase private timber holdings from private owners there so as to safeguard the operations."¹² Because of his background in both the Forest Service and the timber industry, the people of Port Angeles paid his way to testify before the House Committee on Public Lands in support of a resolution to establish Mount Olympus National Park. Morgenroth argued that "industry is not hurt or handicapped or never will be by any national park that may be created here."¹³ He feared that the continued practice of logging old growth timber would decimate the peninsula, destroy watersheds, and ruin the economy. He pointed out to the committee members that pulpwood production would support the local economy indefinitely, while logging of old growth timber would not. Pulpwood trees reproduce in forty years; old growth timber trees such as Douglas Fir reproduce in 200 years. By protecting virgin stands of Douglas Fir -- which included some trees "up to a thousand years old, . . . 300 feet high, and [with] . . . a diameter of fourteen feet"¹⁴ -- the establishment of a national park would encourage an economy based on pulpwood production, would protect the watersheds, all of which emanated from the heart of the peninsula, and would protect the habitat of the Roosevelt Elk, a species unique to the Olympic Peninsula.

In the fall of 1937, when President Franklin Delano Roosevelt visited Lake Crescent on Olympic Peninsula to discuss the proposed national park, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes who accompanied FDR, stayed at the Morgenroth Cabin. According to Katherine Morgenroth Flaherty, Ickes enjoyed the lake so much that he returned to the area twice for summer vacations, hiking into the back country with Chris Morgenroth on both occasions.¹⁵ In 1937, the Forest Service also remodeled the building.¹⁶

President Roosevelt established the Olympic National Park on June 29, 1938, and the Storm King Ranger Station fell under the jurisdiction

of the National Park Service. In 1952, the Park Service estimated the original cost of the cabin at \$2,300, and its "present" value at \$4,704.¹⁷ This record listed the building's structural condition as "fair to poor" and its mechanical condition as "fair." It described the cabin's occupancy as "temporary."

Katherine Morgenroth Flaherty suggested in a 1962 letter that the Park Service consider housing a small historic museum in the ranger station thereby preserving for future generations "pioneer life on the peninsula at the turn of the century."¹⁸ In 1972, the Olympic National Park with the support of the Pacific Northwest Regional Office (PNRO) began the long process to have the ranger station demolished or removed to a location less precarious than its site under the curve of a highway notorious for accidents at nearly every bend. In July 1972, George Hartzog, Director of the National Park Service, denied a request that the building be demolished, suggesting in the same memo that the park find other uses for the cabin if its current function as employee quarters was no longer needed.¹⁹ Citing unbearable noise, an uncomfortable location, and high maintenance costs, the Olympic National Park on March 28, 1976, called the cabin an "eyesore" and an "extravagance" and proposed to "begin action to remove the structure."²⁰ A 1976 survey conducted by the Denver Service Center noted the cabin's deteriorating condition and estimated that it would cost \$40,000 to repair and rehabilitate the structure.²¹ Nevertheless, the building was placed on the park's list of classified structures as a result of this report.

The Pacific Northwest Regional Office first mentioned that the cabin might be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places in 1974,²² but recommended that nomination be delayed pending "determination of whether or not it is feasible to preserve the building(s), and whether or not the historical themes which they represent are represented by other building(s)." Based on an on-site inspection in the spring of 1978, the Washington State Office of Archaeology and History suggested that several of the buildings (including Storm King Ranger Station "may qualify for listing on the National Register" and therefore merit further investigation.²³ In a response dated July 27, 1978, the PNRO essentially agreed.²⁴

On June 13, 1979, the 1972 prediction of Lake Crescent Area Manager Larry Feser that "when a logging truck misses that curve, it will pretty much demolish the building,"²⁵ nearly occurred. As a dump truck pulling an eighteen-ton John Deere 755 loader on a trailer came around the aforementioned curve, "the loader came off the trailer, went thru [sic] the guardrail, and into the southeast corner (kitchen) of the Morganroth [sic] log cabin (a historic structure)."²⁶ Olympic National Park estimated the preservation and damage repair cost of the building at \$73,000²⁷ -- essentially beyond repair -- and recommended that the structure be offered

for sale and offsite removal. In October 1979, the park requested approval to dispose of the building²⁸ and received it in July 1980.²⁹

On December 4, 1980, the same day that the Government Services Administration approved the sale and removal of the cabin, Katherine Morgenroth Flaherty visited the Pacific Northwest Regional Office to inquire about the status of the building.³⁰ Although Olympic National Park had kept her brother, John, informed, and he had "no problem with removal," neither the park nor John Morgenroth had notified Mrs. Flaherty, and she did have a problem with it.³¹ Despite Mrs. Flaherty, the park continued to pursue the proper procedures³² necessary to dispose of the cabin. The Clallam County Historical Society expressed interest in acquiring the cabin, but did not follow up on it.³³ The Quilleute Valley Cultural Association in Forks sought to have the park donate the cabin to them.³⁴ Mrs. Flaherty protested, and tried to spur the Friends of Lake Crescent, a private group, into acquiring the building. None of these efforts met with success.

Mrs. Flaherty brought the plight of the cabin to the attention of Jacob Thomas, the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). After requesting and reviewing the documentation, SHPO did not concur that the structure did not meet criteria for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places because of highway accident damage; and it did not agree with Olympic National Park's decision to demolish the building. Therefore, SHPO sought a Determination of Eligibility from the National Register, which was granted on December 28, 1981.³⁵

In order to complete realignment of U.S. 101 and eliminate the dangerous curve that resulted in the accident that damaged the Morgenroth Cabin, the Pacific Northwest Regional Office of the National Park Service, on October 20, 1982, submitted to the Western Office of Review and Compliance, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation a proposal to remove and restore the cabin. The Memorandum of Agreement,³⁶ which was included in the proposal, stipulated that the National Park Service complete a written history complete with record photographs and measured drawings done according to standards established by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS). The cabin will then be dismantled and reconstructed on Barnes Point, where it will serve as a visitor contact point for the Lake Crescent area. The cabin will thus continue to occupy an important place in the activities and history of Lake Crescent.

Architectural Information: Storm King Ranger Station

General Statement

Architectural Character: Storm King Ranger Station is a skillfully constructed one-and-one-half story log structure. The careful detailing of structural elements and the strict attention to detail throughout certainly makes the dwelling more than a primitive log cabin. The view of Lake Crescent from the front porch and the placement of the building on the shore of the lake significantly enhance its architectural character.

Condition of Fabric: Significant damage was done to the structure in June of 1979 when a front loader struck the cabin after flipping off its trailer while traveling on adjacent Highway 101. Portions of the south and east walls were completely destroyed and the entire cabin was knocked out of alignment.

The cabin also has some powder post beetle infestation, a very common condition to historic buildings in the region.

Description of Exterior

Overall dimensions: The cabin is basically rectangular with an enclosed lean-to porch on the rear elevation and an open lean-to porch across the front. The building is approximately twenty-nine feet across and thirty-five feet deep, including both porches. The cabin is a story-and-one-half with two symmetrically placed gabled dormers on the front elevation.

Foundations: The foundation consists of upright log rounds supporting sill logs around the perimeter of the building and under the center of the cabin. Some of these untreated posts rest on the ground while others rest on stone masonry piers. The foundation is skirted with eighteen-to-twenty shakes attached to one-by-four boards at the sill log and at the ground. This foundation skirt is missing in places and is generally in poor repair.

Walls: The walls of the cabin are peeled cup-notched fir logs with sawn ends. The logs are untreated on the exterior. The enclosed rear porch is of crude wood-frame construction covered with cedar shingles with twelve-inch exposure.

Structural System: Log floor joists are generally ten inches in diameter, approximately two feet on center, and are notched into the north and south sill log of the cabin. The exposed ceiling joists found throughout the structure are also notched into the north and south log walls. These joists are also about ten inches in diameter. Roof rafters are notched into the top wall log. There is no continuous ridge log, so the rafters on each side of the roof rest on each other and are blocked in between.

Porches: The open front porch of the cabin is covered with a lean-to constructed of log poles. The roof is covered with cedar shingles. The flooring material is four-inch tongue-and-groove material running its width. The porch is skirted in a similar fashion as the main building foundation. The porch railing, which is missing in places, is not original to the cabin. Its construction is crude, consisting of a top log rail of about three-to-four inches in diameter with one-by-four support rails. A wood step which was located in the center of the porch, has been removed.

The back porch is also a lean-to structure. The enclosed portion is of crude wood-frame construction and extends two-thirds the total porch length. The east portion is open. The flooring is a plank material that runs the length of the porch.

Chimneys: A slate stone fireplace chimney was added to the west elevation of the cabin. Since this chimney was simply added to the exterior of the building and was not tied to the structure, it was virtually destroyed when the cabin was struck in June of 1979.

A central chimney of common red brick, though no longer in use, once served a central heating unit.

Openings: Windows: Pairs of one-over-one double hung sash windows are found on the front of the first level. Two pairs of single pane casement windows flank the exterior chimney on the west side. Pairs of four pane casement windows are located on the dormers of the front elevation. Windows on the first level of the east and south facades of the cabin have been destroyed as a result of damage sustained in the June 1979 incident. The enclosed back porch has two six-pane casement windows. A pair of single-pane casement windows are found in the second story of the east facade.

Doors: The cabin's front door, leading from the porch to the living room has twelve glass panes and two recessed vertical panels in the lower portion.

The back door has been removed.

Roof: The cabin has a cedar shingle gable roof with two north facing gabled dormers.

Description of Interior

Floor Plan: The first floor plan is divided into a four-room configuration of living room, kitchen, bath, and bedroom. The upper level is divided into two large sleeping spaces with generous closets. Materials used in the partition walls on both floors give evidence that these walls were constructed long after the cabin was originally built, probably in the 1930s.

Stairway: The stairway to the second floor is located in the southeast corner of the living room. The treads and risers are of finished pine. The railing is constructed of log poles. These poles are consistent in size and shape and have been varnished, giving them a nice finished quality.

Flooring: Flooring is vertical grain fir throughout.

Walls and Ceiling Finish: Interior log walls are exposed throughout except in the kitchen and bathroom. These log walls are cut flat and have been varnished on the first floor. The second floor log walls have been left round and untreated. Partition walls on the first and second floor are one-by-eight tongue-and-groove knotty pine, varnished a natural color. Ceilings on the second floor are also knotty pine. Ceilings in the living room and first floor bedroom have exposed log beams with four-inch tongue-and-groove material above running the length of the cabin. Plywood, secured with battens, covers the walls and ceilings of the kitchen and bathroom.

Openings: Interiors doors are generally a single-panel pine type, varnished a natural color. Doors and windows are trimmed in one-by-four or one-by-six pine. Corners are square, not metered. Trim members are also varnished a natural color.

Fireplace: A masonry stone fireplace, with brick lintel and hearth was added to the cabin, probably in the 1930s. This fireplace is located between the two casement windows on the west living room wall and is topped with a rough sawn fir mantel.

Heating: Currently, the cabin has no heat source other than the fireplace. An oil heater was once located in the living room off the central brick chimney.

Site: The cabin is located on Barnes Point on the southern shore of Lake Crescent on Washington's Olympic Peninsula. The cabin is approximately thirty feet from the shoreline. Highway 101 passes the north side of the cabin. Changes in this road bed and right-of-way have pushed debris as far as the northeast corner of the cabin. Surrounding vegetation is typical of the area: heavy forest with much ground cover. The area between the lake and cabin, however, is relatively clear of vegetation.

Notes

1. Helms, Leslie and Gail Evans, Storm King Ranger Station (Morgenroth Cabin) inventory card, PNRO inventory of structures in Olympic National Park, National Park Service, Pacific Northwest Region, Cultural Resources Division, 1982.

2. House Committee on Public Lands, Hearing on H.R. 7086 to establish Mount Olympus National Park, Statement of Chris Morgenroth of Port Angeles, Washington, 74th Congress, 2nd session, 25 April 1936, p. 41.

3. Chris Morgenroth Statement, 1936, p. 41.

4. Chris Morgenroth Statement, 1936, p. 43.

5. Katherine Morgenroth Flaherty letter to Roger Contor, Superintendent of Olympic National Park, 21 November 1981.

6. Russell, Jervis, editor. Jimmy Come Lately: History of Clallam County. Port Angeles: Clallam County Historical Society, 1971, p. 593, quoting Morgenroth's account of the Sol Duc fire.

7. Chris Morgenroth Statement, 1936, p. 44.

8. Fixed Property Record, Building No. 192, 21 January 1952, Maintenance and Property Files, Olympic National Park Archives.

9. Katherine Morgenroth Flaherty letter to R.F. Kennedy, Attorney General of Washington, 6 July 1962.

10. Brooks, Norman. Interview with author. Port Angeles, Washington. 17 February 1983.

11. Draft Nomination Form, National Register of Historic Places, Storm King Ranger Station/Morgenroth Cabin, circa 1980. Citing interview with Jack Nattinger, December 1979. Pat Neal Papers, Clallam County Historical Society. Jack Nattinger spent his entire career with the National Park Service in Olympic National Park.

12. Chris Morgenroth Statement, 1936, p. 41.

13. Chris Morgenroth Statement, 1936, p. 45.

14. Chris Morgenroth Statement, 1936, p. 50.

15. See note 5 above.

16. See note 8 above.

17. See note 8 above.
18. See note 9 above.
19. Director of the National Park Service memo to Director of the Pacific Northwest Regional Office, 24 July 1972.
20. Maintenance and Property Files, Building File No. 192, Olympic National Park Archives.
21. Daniel J. Tobin letter to Jacob Thomas, State Historic Preservation Officer, 9 February 1981.
22. Bennett T. Gale, Associate Regional Director, Professional Services, Pacific Northwest Region memo to Superintendent, Olympic National Park, 26 March 1974.
23. Jeanne M. Welch, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) letter to Russell Dickenson, Regional Director, National Park Service, Pacific Northwest Region, 31 May 1978. This letter refers to SHPO's earlier (1975) assessment of structures on Barnes Point, which appeared in its comments on The Development Concept Plan of 1976 for Barnes Point (prepared in accordance with Advisory Council's "Procedures for the Protection . . ." 36 CFR Part 800. The letter states "SHPO's comments at that time indicated doubts as to the National Register potential of these properties."
24. Edward J. Kurtz, Acting Regional Director letter to Jeanne M. Welch, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, 27 July 1978.
25. Larry Feser, Lake Crescent Area Manager memo to East District Manager, 9 August 1972.
26. Supplementary Case/Incident Record, No. 790555, 13 June 1979.
27. Report of Survey No. RS 9500-0-0001, United States Department of the Interior, 12 October 1979.
28. Roger J. Contor memo to Regional Director, PNRO, 23 October 1979, and subsequent Edward J. Kurtz memo to Associate Director, Management and Operations, National Park Service, 27 December 1979.
29. Daniel J. Tobin, Jr. memo to Regional Director, PNRO, 21 April 1980 and subsequent Charles H. Odegaard memo to Superintendent, Olympic National Park, 2 July 1980.
30. Glen Gallison of PNRO telephone call to Don Jackson of Olympic National Park, 4 December 1980, 10:20 a.m.
31. Katherine Morgenroth Flaherty letter to Roger Contor, Superintendent of Olympic National Park, 3 January 1981.

32. Review by State Historic Preservation Officer; Archeological Clearance Survey Form, 17 July 1981.

33. Telephone conversations between Bernie Parrish and M. Perry, and between Hank Warren and M. Perry, 18 December 1980. See also note 21 above.

34. Bernie Parrish telephone call to Marti Perry, 19 August 1981 2:19 p.m.

35. Determination of Eligibility, Executive Order 11593, issued by Carol Shull, Acting keeper of the National Register on 28 December 1981.

36. Memorandum of Agreement, signed on 22 November 1982 by Robert Garvey, Executive Director, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation; Charles H. Odegaard, Acting Regional Director, PNRO, National Park Service; Jacob E. Thomas, Washington State Historic Preservation Officer; and on 29 November 1982 by Alexander Aldrich, Chairman, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

References

- Brooks, Norman. Interview with author. Port Angeles, Washington, 17 February 1983.
- Denboe, John. Ranger Station Quarters No. 5 Storm King (Morgenroth Cabin), circa 1982. Olympic National Park Historical Files.
- Draft Nomination Form, National Register of Historic Places, Storm King Ranger Station/Morgenroth Cabin, circa 1980. Pat Neal Papers, Clallam County Historical Society.
- Flaherty, Katherine Morgenroth letter to R.F. Kennedy, Attorney General of Washington, 6 July 1962.
- Flaherty, Katherine Morgenroth letter to Roger Contor, Superintendent of Olympic National Park, 3 January 1981.
- Flaherty, Katherine Morgenroth letter to Roger Contor, Superintendent of Olympic National Park, 21 November 1981.
- Maintenance and Property Files, Building No. 21, Olympic National Park Archives.
- Morgenroth Cabin File, National Park Service, Cultural Resources Division, Pacific Northwest Regional Office, Seattle, Washington.
- Obituary, Chris Morgenroth, 24 August 1939, Port Angeles Evening News, page 1.
- Russell, Jervis, editor. Jimmy Come Lately: History of Clallam County, A Symposium. Port Angeles: Clallam County Historical Society, 1971.
- U.S. House Committee on Public Lands, Hearing on H.R. 7086 to establish Mount Olympus National Park, Statement of Chris Morgenroth of Port Angeles, Washington, 74th Congress, 2nd session, 25 April 1936, p. 41.